

# TOWN COUNCIL

## STAFF REPORT

### Department of Growth Management



<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	May 9, 2023
<b>PROJECT:</b>	Consideration of Approval of an Amendment to the Master Plan for Village at Verdier within the Village at Verdier Planned Unit Development to Remove a Previously Approved Residential Access Point on Approximately 124.2 Acres Located East of SC Highway 170 at Seagrass Station Road
<b>PROJECT MANAGER:</b>	Kevin Icard, Director of Growth Management

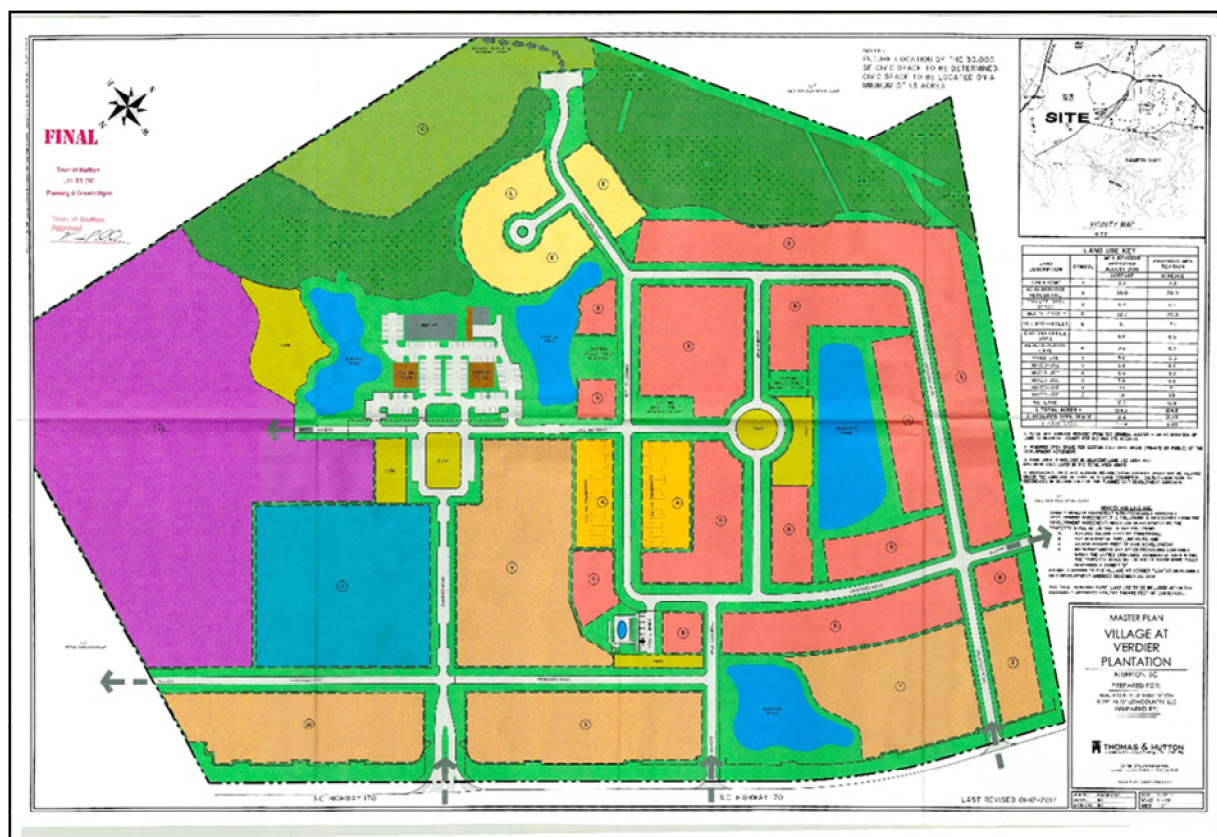
**REQUEST:** Town Staff requests Town Council to approve an amendment to the existing Master Plan for Village at Verdier, aka Seagrass Station (Attachments 2 and 3).

**INTRODUCTION:** The Applicant, Dan Keefer of Witmer Jones Keefer, Ltd, with authorization of the property owners, Charlie and Brown LLC and Bright Holdings LLC, is requesting approval for an amendment to the currently approved Master Plan for Village at Verdier (Attachment 4). More specifically, the amendment request includes:

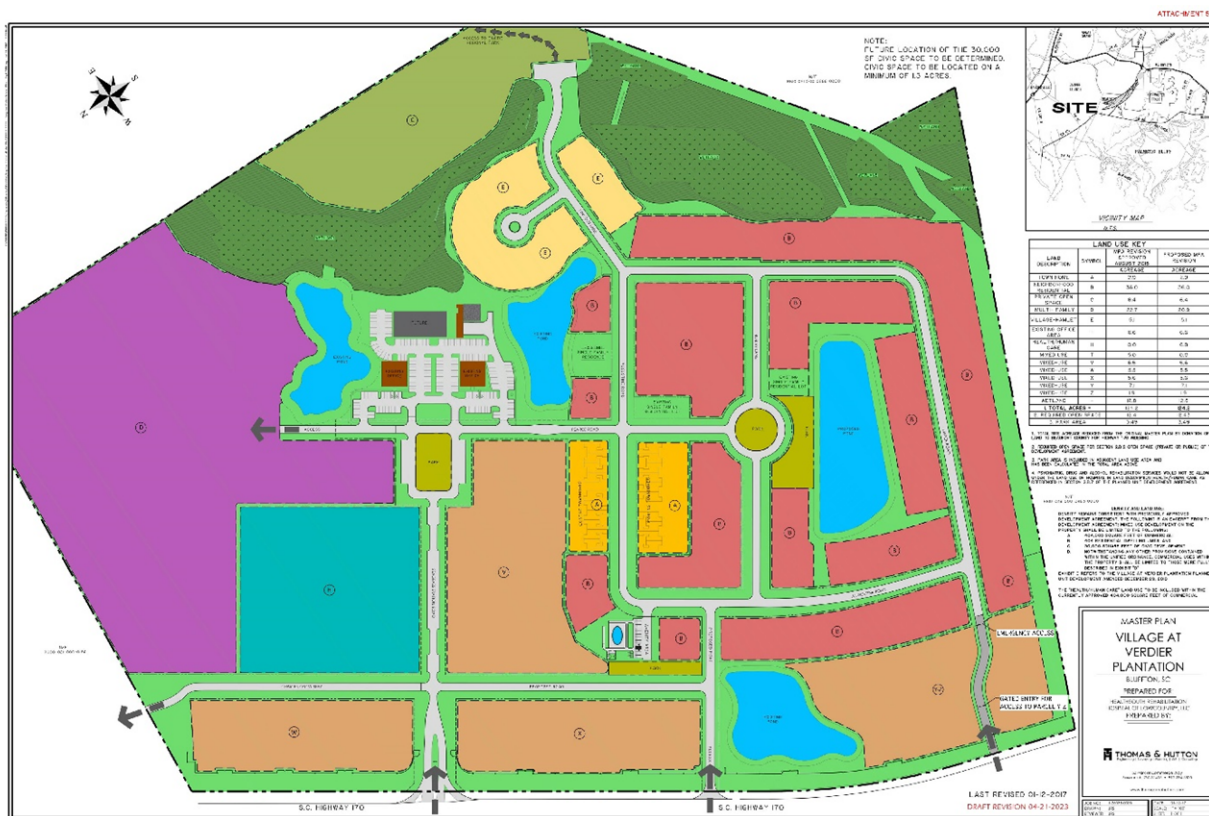
1. Removal of a previously approved residential access point connection to SC Highway 170 (Okatie Highway) between Parcels Y and Z.
2. At the request of Town Staff, the master plan has been further amended to reflect changes that have occurred on the ground during the development of Village at Verdier since the master plan was approved. (Attachments 5 and 6).

**BACKGROUND:** The Village at Verdier Development Agreement and Initial Master Plan were originally approved in 2002. Since 2002, the Village at Verdier Master Plan has been amended twice, with the most recent amendment approved by Town Council on January 10, 2017 (Attachment 4). While the subject parcels of this master plan amendment request are currently vacant, portions of the Village at Verdier PUD have been developed. There are existing paved roads, utility infrastructure and developed residential and commercial areas. The current master plan shows Parcel X as having access from Seagrass Station Road and directly from SC Highway 170, while Parcels Y and Z share an access directly from SC Highway 170. All three parcels also have internal access from the Seagrass Station residential development in Parcel B.

The Applicant is acting on behalf of Charlie and Brown LLC (the developer), who are the current owner of Parcels Y and Z, and are currently under contract to purchase Parcel X. The developer is proposing a Car Village facility for an automotive enthusiast's club on Parcels Y and Z, which includes buildings for private and common use by members of the club. This use was approved as a permitted use by the Town of Bluffton Board of Zoning Appeals on June 28, 2022.



### Existing Master Plan



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*Proposed Master Plan*

A preliminary development plan for the proposed Car Village development was heard at the September 21, 2022, meeting of the Development Review Committee. While the current master plan shows a through road connection between Parcels Y and Z from SC Highway 170 to the residential properties in Parcel B, the preliminary site plan for the proposed Car Village development shows the road as gated access/emergency access (Attachment 7). The Applicant has provided a letter from the Seagrass Station Single Family Homeowners Association stating that “68% of the (homeowner) membership prefer an emergency access only gate between Hagar Road and Car Village to be constructed at the sole expense of the owners of Car Village” (Attachment 8). Town Staff also met with the Seagrass Station HOA Community Manager who verified that the homeowners in Seagrass Station would prefer that the road connection serve as emergency access only and not a permanent through street.

Comments on the current master plan amendment were reviewed at the November 23, 2022, meeting of the Development Review Committee (Attachment 9). The Applicant addressed the DRC comments in a December 2, 2022, resubmittal that included a traffic memo addressing the traffic impacts of the proposed roadway changes requested in this master plan amendment (Attachment 10). The purpose of this traffic memorandum is to show traffic impacts of the proposed roadway changes compared to the currently approved Village at Verdier Master Plan. In the summary of the traffic memorandum, it is noted that “Based on the capacity analysis, removing access to Hager Street will have a minimal impact on the surrounding roadway network”.

**PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:** The Town of Bluffton’s Planning Commission voted at the January 25, 2023, meeting to recommend to Town Council to approve the Village at Verdier Master Plan Amendment subject to the following conditions:

1. Replace a previously approved residential road connection between Parcels Y and Z with a gated, emergency access road; and
2. Remove a previously approved road in Parcel X. *(Note: This request has been withdrawn by the Applicant.)*

**PREVIOUS TOWN COUNCIL MEETING AND FOLLOW-UP:** On March 14, 2023, Town Council approved a motion to table the request until such time as Town Staff and the Developer attend a Seagrass Station Single Family Property Owners Association. The intent of the meeting would be to present the applicant’s request to the association and allow the association members the opportunity to provide comment.

On April 27, 2023, the request was presented by Town Staff at a regularly scheduled zoom meeting of the Seagrass Station Single Family Property Owners Association. There was a total of 19 attendees including the applicant and developer. Several attendees spoke in favor of replacing a previously approved residential road connection between Parcels Y and Z with a gated, emergency access road. No attendees spoke in opposition to this request.

## **REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS**

The Planning Commission is required to consider the criteria set forth in Section 3.9.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance in assessing an application for a Master Plan. These criteria are provided below followed by a Staff Finding(s).

**1. Section 3.9.3.B. Promotion of and consistency with the land use goals, environmental objectives and overall intent of the policies within the Comprehensive Plan.**

*Finding. The requested master plan amendment results in minor modifications to the transportation network.*

The vision of the Village at Verdier master plan is to create a mixed-use, live-work-play community, which is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's vision of a balance of land uses to ensure a high quality of life, business opportunity, environmentally protected areas and proper placement of commercial uses.

**2. Section 3.9.3.C. Consistency with the intent of the Planned Unit Development Zoning District as prescribed in this Ordinance.**

*Finding. The application is consistent with the Town of Bluffton Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance that applies to the Village at Verdier Plantation Planned Unit Development Master Plan.*

The Village at Verdier was designed to be a mixed-use development divided into five planning areas. The parcels that are the subject of this amendment are within the Commercial Area and the use has been established as a permitted use.

**3. Section 3.9.3.D. As applicable, consistency with the provisions of the associated Development Agreement and/or PUD Concept Plan.**

*Finding. The application is consistent with the provisions of the Village at Verdier Development Agreement.*

The proposed change to the Master Plan will not affect the permitted uses or overall density cap for commercial development.

**4. Section 3.9.3.E. Compatibility of proposed land uses, densities, traffic circulation and design with adjacent land uses and environmental features, as well as the character of the surrounding area.**

*Finding. The application is compatible with the surrounding area.*

The application does not request a change in land use or an increase in development density. The change in traffic circulation is supported by the adjacent homeowner's association and the submitted traffic report finds that removing the parallel road and the access to Hagar Street will have minimal impact on the surrounding road network.

5. **Section 3.9.3.F.** Ability to be served by adequate public services, including, but not limited to, water, sanitary sewer, roads, police, fire, and school services. For developments that have the potential for significant impact on infrastructure and services the applicant shall be required to provide an analysis and mitigation of the impact on transportation, utilities, and community services.

*Finding. The property is able to be served by adequate public services.*

*The Village at Verdier Development Agreement has previously provided an analysis and mitigation measures on the impact on transportation, utilities, and community services within. In addition, the Applicant has provided a traffic report that finds that removing the parallel road and the access to Hagar Street will have minimal impact on the surrounding road network.*

6. **Section 3.9.3.G.** Demonstration of innovative site planning techniques that improve upon the standards in other allowable Town of Bluffton zoning districts with the purpose of enhancing the Town of Bluffton's health, safety and welfare.

*Finding. The Master Plan includes innovative site planning techniques that enhance the Town's health, safety, and welfare.*

The vision of the Village at Verdier master plan is to create a mixed-use, live-work-play community. The site is being developed using the best practices in stormwater management and design guidelines. Pedestrian connections will be provided to connect the development to the existing pedestrian network and proposed commercial development along SC Highway 170.

7. **Section 3.9.3.H.** Ability of the site to sufficiently accommodate the densities and land use intensities of the proposed development.

*Finding. The requested amendment to the master plan does not impact the previously approved densities and land use intensities of the Village at Verdier Development Agreement and Master Plan.*

8. **Section 3.9.3.I.** Conformance with adopted or accepted plans, policies, and practices of the Town of Bluffton.

*Finding. The requested master plan amendment results in minor modifications to the transportation network and is in conformance with adopted or accepted plans, policies, and practices of the Town.*

**TOWN COUNCIL ACTION:** Town Council has the authority to take the following action:

- Approve the application as submitted by the Applicant;
- Approve the application with conditions; or
- Deny the application as submitted by the Applicant

**NEXT STEPS:** Town Council consideration of the request by majority vote.

<b>Master Plan Amendment Procedure</b>	<b>Step Completed</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
Step 1. Pre-Application Meeting	✓	September 22, 2022
Step 2. Application Check-In Meeting	✓	October 17, 2022
Step 3. Review by UDO Administrator	✓	October 17, 2022
Step 4. Development Review Committee	✓	November 23, 2022
Step 5. Planning Commission Recommendation	✓	January 25, 2023
Step 6. Town Council Consideration of Master Plan Amendment	<b>TABLED</b>	March 14, 2023
Step 6. Town Council Consideration of Master Plan Amendment	✓	May 9, 2023

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Town Council Presentation
2. Application and Narrative
3. Location Map
4. Existing Master Plan
5. Proposed Master Plan
6. Proposed Master Plan (Annotated)
7. Car Village Preliminary Site Plan
8. Homeowner's Association Letter
9. DRC Comments\_11-23-22
10. Verdier Master Plan Traffic Report